

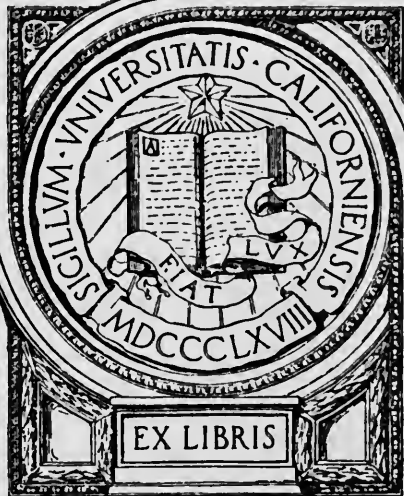
THE HARMONIOUS LIFE

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ROLF HOFFMANN

To our dear "Dear Letter"
with love and affectionate
greetings.

March 1931.



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THE HARMONIOUS LIFE

THE HARMONIOUS LIFE

BY

E. L.

(Emily Lemcke-Nevesheimer.)
Los Angeles.

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"A force de se cacher aux autres, on finit par ne plus se retrouver soi-même."

MAETERLINCK.

FOR this reason I wrote these lines, and having written them, I feel that there may be some to whom thoughts that are helpful and beautiful to me may be helpful and beautiful also, I therefore venture to offer my reader this little book.

E. L.

203580



THE HARMONIOUS LIFE

I

THOUGHTS, thoughts ! Is not the whole world, the universe, the thought of the Divine, the Infinite, reflected in the human soul ? And yet how different the reflection in each single mind ! For are we not as so many panes of glass through which, if kept clean, the light of the spirit may shine in numberless combinations of iridescent colour ? As in a kaleidoscope the picture changes, so change the pictures of our thoughts ; and yet a thousand times faster, thoughts fly through the mind almost unperceived. Reader, dost thou at times arrest them in their flight and say, "What art thou, whence comest thou, thou bird of passage ?"

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2

That which we call reality—these pictures impressed on our minds by the external world—are they day-dreams, sad or sweet, that will be forgotten or partially wiped out by sleep or death? Or are thoughts a structure, ethereal, yet more lasting than a house of stone that thou shapest, O man, thou master-builder?

3

Our past is what our present makes it. What we are determines the value of our past. And the future? Ah, how sweet to dream, and, dreaming, make our dream-world true! With vision focussed on some fair ideal, resplendent in beauty and loveliness, the soul vibrates and throbs in harmony with the Divine. No weak, no aimless drifting backwards or forwards, but longings, fancies, sweet imaginings, intense with life, urging us on to ever-increasing effort, and to hopes fulfilled.

4

Once having recognized our goal, and set before ourselves some purpose worthy of attainment, we must ever continue to foster thoughts of this fair ideal and concentrate our minds on its perfection and beauty, that in and through us it may take form in all the things of our daily life.

5

The Divine manifests itself to us through conscious or unconscious aspiration, and we should, therefore, not let our thoughts dwell on ugliness and evil, unless we feel within ourselves the power to rectify the same, for as long as our thought is beautiful, our word and deed will be beautiful also. We should glean beauty wheresoever we go, that we may sow joy from the fruits of our gathering.

6

The world is to each one of us what our senses, intellect, and experience make it, and the facts and impressions we gather within the store-house of our minds are the material wherewith we build our lives, the quality of which is the measure of our worth. There are rules of conduct by which man governs his life, which may be swept away by some over-mastering passion or temptation; but there are some things a well-trained mind (of which self-control and consequent repose of manner are the surest signs) cannot do, because they are against its very nature.

7

The object of our education should be to place before us such knowledge and ideals as shall give us a broad and wide understanding, and fit us to make our judgment as free of prejudice as possible.

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Is it not strange that so much time, energy, and thought should be wasted on ill-feeling towards those who have never done us any harm, those who, perhaps, we scarcely know, of different race, country, or creed to ourselves, whom we dislike by reason of our prejudice alone? Difference of tongue, of worldly interests, of superficial customs that we keep alive by means of prejudice or patriotism, serve but as barriers to divide soul from soul, and prevent that free intercourse between man and man which would mean mutual understanding, appreciation, and consequent "peace on earth, and good-will towards men."

8

A personal element colours our every experience, and determines the nature of our beliefs, opinions, and sufferings. Each word we say bears the stamp of the thought that vitalizes it, and what we do is, invariably, a faithful picture of

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what we are. Even the health of our bodies, our appearance, and the work we do, bear the impress of our minds, for our outer is the echo of our inner life, and proclaims the same, however carefully we may try to conceal it. An unbalanced mind cannot give forth a chord of purest harmony ; it must express the discord that reigns within, for the untrained and unbridled emotions are as incapable of good as the untrained intellect. There are those who believe that the fulness of life lies alone in variety and scope of emotional experience. This can, however, be of but little value apart from the criticism and control of the intellect. To attain the highest human ideal—the harmonious working together of all the faculties—neither reason nor the emotions may rule supreme, but both together, and each in the right place and proportion. Also the marriage of soul and body must be on terms of equality to produce perfect harmony. Both soul and body have claims which may not be

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neglected, for even as spiritual power gives strength to the body, so also physical vigour gives force to the soul.

9

The body is no "prison house," but the crucible that holds the gold, a necessary tool, more or less fine, greatly according to our own making, by the aid of which the spirit grows and reveals itself to man.

10

Although the Divine can but become manifest to our present consciousness through some form or shape of more or less dense matter, yet even the most subtle expressions of the Divine that we know—colour, form, and harmony of sound—are bound within the limits of time and space, and are conceptions limited by our physical perceptions. They may, however, not be, as they

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appear to us now, indispensable attributes of Divine truth and beauty, but necessary symbols of things that we, so far, can but vaguely sense, and which we may learn to understand more and more perfectly as our consciousness of the Divine grows, with the refinement of our intuitive feeling, and the development and growth of our knowledge, purity, and wisdom. Which of us is fit for heaven, or could even draw a mental picture of an after-life for the soul made perfect? Must not the soul first have developed to a perfection far beyond our present comprehension, have acquired a capacity for a refinement of enjoyment far beyond what even the most sensitive of us at present can conceive to understand of perfection of bliss?

II

Even as we have developed faculties unknown of, and probably far beyond the wildest dreams of our ancestors of

long ago, so have we within us latent psychic faculties that future ages will unfold, which, however, even now, are more developed in some than in others. There are those endowed with special powers to see beauty of sight or of sound, and again others gifted with a marvellously keen perception of spiritual loveliness, but we very rarely find both united in one individual.

12

How much more the sense of æsthetic beauty is developed in some of us than the sense of spiritual beauty! The great moral and spiritual geniuses of humanity, like Christ, like the Buddha, see and prove, that the most perfect expression of the Divine is ineffable, and can only be expressed and experienced by a stainless heart. To *be* something beautiful is infinitely more difficult than to *do* something beautiful, and absorbs each moment of a lifetime. What could excel

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in beauty the life of Christ and his glorious death, his ecstasy of faith and passionate love of truth without the least hope or thought of self-glorification? No manifestation of the Divine on earth has shown us more perfect success, ever-growing and extending, than this, at the time, apparent failure.

13

Although the perfection of beauty must be pure, above all things it cannot be passionless, or cold, for the love of truth and beauty, like all true love, is a passion of more or less intensity. Even as all colours unite in one ray of purest white, so every shade and colour of true beauty unites in perfect purity, and he who purifies his own heart, purifies and beautifies the whole world. The spirit of the universe is, in each human being, subjected to the influence of different surroundings and conditions that it may develop in all and every direction, and

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no one being can rise without lifting the whole of which he is but a more or less infinitesimal part.

14

Our aim in life is the attainment of the greatest possible degree of happiness for ourselves and others, but each one of us has a different scale, that of our various experiences and opportunities, by which we may weigh, measure, and choose that form of happiness which may seem to us the most worth striving to obtain.

15

Our present civilization, with its sharp contrasts between rich and poor, high and low, is like a woman who wears a gorgeously beautiful gown, although she has not a decent chemise to her back, not having learnt to know the beauty and refinement of simplicity.

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16

Much of our modern art is a faithful picture of the artificial and inharmonious times in which we live. It is a succession of discords which, however, like a joyous prophecy resolve themselves into harmony.

17

It is, however, not by laws for the masses alone that happiness can be attained, that the spirit of the Universe can advance, but chiefly by individual effort, and the intrinsic value of each modifies and decides the worth of all. Is not the greatest good the increase in the value and the happiness of all mankind as a great whole ?

18

Divine goodness is a disposition to create happiness by producing what is

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harmonious and beautiful, and its object is the attainment of the greatest general happiness in the long run. Surely joy is for us all, but it must be the joy of loving, the joy of giving, the joy of faith, and the joy of conquest—the joy of the conquest of self, which is the joy of the strong.

19

The welfare of the individual must eventually become synonymous with the welfare of the human race as a whole. Each of us must learn to lay aside unnecessary luxury, and seek that only for ourselves which, apart from the absolutely needful, will prevent our lives and homes from lacking in refinement. Our overplus should go there where it is really needed, for the greatest wisdom is to be satisfied with little. To the true-hearted and pure-minded, luxury can bring no real happiness, but a mere

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temporary intoxication of the senses by indulgence, which leaves nerve, muscle, and morals relaxed and weakened. Of what use can be luxury if the happiness it brings be selfish? It can but serve as a barrier to divide man from man and heart from heart. We should all, therefore, try in the first place to rise superior to the desire of out-shining others in external matters of mere show. Do we not thereby often create feelings of envy and discontent in others, and a desire for things they cannot obtain? Is not greater knowledge and refinement of feeling a sufficient distinction for us? And, if desired, this can be acquired by all, and will attract to us those of kindred tastes and sympathies.

20

The small luxuries and comforts of life are apt to play all too large a part in the lives especially of women bent

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on pleasure, who are dependent on luxury and excitement for the same.

21

A woman's life is so filled with care for the details of life that she usually fails in forming a correct idea of the proportion of things and events one to another ; consequently she is more prone than man to make much of little things and "mountains out of mole-hills."

22

It is those who give up the thought of planning happiness for themselves who find it in unexpected fulness in return for the love and service they give to others, and it is those who give self all their heart's devotion, pity and tenderness, who lose the true gladness, joyousness, and fulness of life, for self-indulgence and inutility breed pessimism.

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23

Happiness lies in contentment, in making the best of what the present can give, without always looking to the future to bring us something better. Neither should we, however, spoil the brightness of to-day with thoughts of the shadow that to-morrow may, or may not, throw across our path.

24

As we grow older in wisdom and in years, we become more and more reticent about our personal feelings. We find that talking about our grievances does not, as a rule, change circumstances, and to speak of what is painful to us is but to resuscitate pain that might be forgotten in the action of a busy life.

25

In times of prosperity man may be proud and selfish, cruel and unjust, but

sorrow, sickness, and death bring us all to the same level, and make of us but poor creatures in need of help, sympathy, and love. How often we forget this our dependence on others.

26

He who is sick longs to be restored to health, only then fully appreciating what he has lost ; but he whose soul is sick seldom realizes how much he is lacking in beauty, soundness, and vigour of mind.

27

How little understanding do we show when we blame the blind soul that it cannot see, for how can we know what cloud obscures its vision, what suffering may be needful to disperse the same? Every victory of the soul is bought by painful effort, and thus alone the spirit can grow free of the limitations of the "ego," and learn to stand alone.

The wise are always more anxious to learn than to teach, and, seeing faults in others, either individually or as a class, rather view them as a lesson and a warning than as a cause for adverse criticism. Human nature, at the best, is but frail and weak, therefore the blame of the wise should become changed to compassion. We may be sure that the most humble and imperfect of those we meet know something that we do not, and are, therefore, in some way, wiser than we are.

How hard it is to live at the high mental level that we would, and how easily we drift into the mental sphere of those with whom we come into contact ; longing for a moment perchance for things that we really know are not worth having ; judging others in a way

that is against our better knowledge ; living for a while a mental life that is scarcely our own. And yet to learn, we must be able to measure ourselves with others. Who has not known those who, in parting, have left us with a feeling of vague unrest, a yearning for a suggested truth, a subtle beauty, of which they have revealed to us a glimpse, leaving us at war with ourselves? Perchance our efforts to do right may appear to others as great a failure as their righteousness does to us, and our wisdom as great a delusion, for each of us has another standard of good and evil, hence the things which appear wise to us may seem folly to others. We are so inclined to think ourselves better and wiser than our neighbours, and to exaggerate our importance, but may it not sometimes be our judgment that is at fault? Let us consider well what we say and do ; but remember always that what is unlovely to thy soul is evil for thee.

The reward we get for the love and service we give to others is self-forgetfulness. We find no time to brood over real or fancied wrongs, but have our minds filled with healthful and beautiful thoughts instead.

Well as we may love the flowers, we cannot cross the meadow without crushing, perchance, even one of those we love the best ; however, an exaggerated virtue is a fault, and an excess of unselfishness is often weakness, or, in any case, what may appear to be unselfishness at first sight. Impulsive unselfishness is certainly attractive, especially in the young. But it is like promiscuous alms, and should be governed by self-control which first tries to probe the efficacy, and consider the result, of what it does, even for others. Too

much impulsive giving may foster selfishness in those we wish to benefit, and often makes them lose their power for independent action. The best way to help others is to help them to help themselves.

32

Every virtue borders upon a fault, and the border-line between the two is called moderation.

33

If we wish for disinterested love and friendship, we must be content with only a very few friends. If, however, our aim in life be to court the regard of many, we must needs have a good social position, fame, much money, or a mouth full of flattery, for the world generally lays more store by the quality of riches, rank, and fame, than by the intrinsic value of the individual, irrespective of the outer trappings of circumstances.

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It is, however, not always, as we all know, that the most beautiful lives are found in the upper layers of society.

34

The reason why many long to rise a grade higher in the social scale than that to which they are born, is, that they thereby gain the regard of people, who, thinking themselves superior by reason of greater worldly possessions, would otherwise take no notice of them. What is such regard really worth ?

35

There are two ways of loving others : one for what we can give them, and one for what they can give us. In true love and friendship both one and the other must exist in equal proportion. As soon as distrust steals in, the faith in unfailing affection, upon which we rely as the kernel of all true and deep friendship, gradually dissolves. If a friend prove

false we may be sure that he could never have been capable of true friendship, and the sooner we find this out the better. Wherefore then waste time and energy in vain regrets at the loss of a false ideal? Disillusion is but the painful tearing away of a veil which obscures our view.

36

The spirit knows no standstill; it must eventually advance by experience. The intellect cries, "I think," and the senses cry, "I want." "I think that what I want is best," says a man governed by the senses, until he has learnt his lesson of pain, and then the wounded spirit cries, "I want to think the best alone!" The soul that is dominated by the desire for things temporal knows not the pure and peaceful beauty of truth which is the perfection of beauty. Enthralled by the bonds of selfish desires, it makes of them a scourge unto itself and others.

Even as a truly great work of art is usually the child of pain, so also is a beautiful life the fruit of renunciation, the renunciation of all that which is evil, and which sows discord. Through the conscience, the voice of the experience of the soul, we must learn to walk, step by step, and grow to be strong and wise, and fit to choose the best.

At the first glimpse of the grandeur and vastness of the Universe, the immensity of space, or the infinity of time, the mind vacillates, and the marvellous beauty of its smallest detail, the mere elementary, yet necessary, parts of the great Divine scheme seem to us trivial, and scarcely worthy of consideration. It is, however, but slowly though surely, that the evolution of the mind of man is bringing him further along the pathway towards the more perfect realization of

truth and beauty, and the perception of the laws of spirit and matter which rule the Universe. It is only by means of a fuller knowledge of these Divine laws, and the more perfect development of our powers of intuitive feeling, that our consciousness of the Divine can grow. Does not our hope for the future lie herein? Everything in the Universe becomes resolved into its composite parts again and again, but only to form some fresh combination ; and every end is but the herald of some fresh beginning, for matter, as also for the soul upon its pilgrimage. Again and again the soul, with its load of passions and desires, becomes free from the physical by Death, that, by being bound too long, it may not lose the power of its spiritual muscles—the will.

Although the human will, which is apparently free, is bound, hand and foot, by circumstances, yet it depends almost

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entirely on ourselves whether these are to be a blessing or a curse to us. The more evolved the soul, the more deliberate and conscious becomes its evolution.

40

The greatest fault of the present day is the excessive nervous strain under which we live, and it is alone by cultivating and strengthening the will that we can close up useless side-channels of harassing thought. It is by concentrating the mind on certain things that to us seem the most important, that waste of nerve-energy and strength may be, at least partially, avoided. We must remember that the weaker we grow, physically or morally, the heavier our burden grows in proportion. The will is the sum of our intellectual experience of good and ill, and results either in a blind struggle in the dark, regardless of consequences, or when carefully

trained and disciplined, action and consequent free submission, after the recognition of necessity.

41

Slow and gradual growth is sure and healthy growth. We cannot, as we would, fly directly to the very source of all things Divine with the impulse of the moment. Higher and higher we would soar, as a bird, ever nearer to the fair blue sky above. Suddenly, however, our strength fails, we are overcome by fatigue, and fall exhausted, with a heavy, hopeless thud, to the ground. Yet even the mistakes we make are good, for man must fall and sin that he may gain the experience of sin, and learn that even as surely as fuel thrown to the flames must burn, so, as inevitably, the result of evil must be suffering. By the law of cause and effect, pain must follow upon the footsteps of error as the shadow the form. If we violate that code of law which lies

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written in our souls, no power can stave off the consequences ; the reward, however, which follows upon the obedience of any one of the unwritten laws of matter and of mind which rule the Universe, is awarded alike to infidel and to saint.

42

He who feels attracted by the deceptive allurements of pleasure of an evil nature, still needs the experience of the same, for evil is the vehicle of a Divine lesson which, when learnt by the more developed soul, is left unnoticed, or cast aside as a hindrance at most. By means of each failure we learn a fresh lesson, and climb one more rung of the ladder which reaches upwards, even unto God. But we are restless and impatient, and measure all things by our small measure of time and space. To God who is infinite, and of infinite resources, there can be no waste of time or of material.

43

There are two kinds of purity—the purity that has known no evil, and the purity that has overcome evil ; but only they who have gone away from God, returning, know Him. They must have found the purity that has learnt to love, wholly, truly, and impersonally, giving itself with a passion, a singleness of purpose that purity alone can know. All love is beautiful, yet how many different shades and colours there are between the love that lies beneath the shadow of selfishness, and the love that floods the whole world with the sunshine of its all-embracing loveliness and beauty. Such love is the unmistakable stamp of the Divine, and is the distinction between infant humanity and God.

44

Create an atmosphere of purity and love around thyself, and evil must depart.

45

Live thy life, O soul ! alone, and yet for the whole world, and not for thyself and thy reward ! To be misunderstood, to give up that which thou wouldst the most desire to have, and to die calmly, perchance with but apparently unfinished work to look upon, because the unspoken word of God, the Infinite, calls for ever in thy soul. The struggle on the heights is indeed glorious to witness, but the greatest nobleness does not always appear manifest in some great and noble deed, done in the heat of passion or excitement, but oft in a succession of days of self-denial like seeds sown within the silent earth, all for the sake of the great undefinable ideal which we can scarcely see, but yet worship with a wonderful passion of devotion, hardly explicable even to ourselves.

46

To nourish and sustain this love and enthusiasm within our hearts we must

endeavour to put ourselves into harmony with the living and Divine energy, the spiritual vitality, from which all things proceed. To this end our hours of rest are as full of meaning as our hours of strenuous effort.

47

Spirit is the essence and leaven of all matter, and, like electricity which can be transformed into light and heat, is a force which cannot be obliterated, but may become transformed into beauty in a myriad different forms. Even as there is matter which acts as a bad conductor to electricity, so evil and ignorance block the passage to spiritual force, which, however, they are powerless to annihilate. Though evil may, for a time, appear more attractive and powerful than good, yet virtue is everlasting truth, beauty, and harmony. Evil is but temporary discord, an impediment whereby purity and beauty

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may measure and gauge the extent of their strength and loveliness.

48

The sweetness and beauty of Nature, of Religion, and of Art, are ours that they may delight, exhilarate, and refresh us, and at the same time also quicken new energy and enthusiasm within our hearts. To our minds, contemplation and concentration of thought, to the soul, prayer and meditation, should be what sleep is to our bodies, a means to impart vigour and strength, refreshment and rest. By consciously sending forth our most worthy desires, we quicken our hopes and aspirations, and make ourselves receptive to those influences of spiritual beauty which at all times surround us.

49

And how shall we escape the contagion of evil? (for there are diseases of the

soul as infectious as those of the body). Not by isolation or flight, but by gaining increase of wisdom and strength ; thus may we become fit to resist evil. It is by means of conscientious living, more than by any amount of study and meditation only, that we progress, that our strength grows. There are those who, though devoid of great intellectuality, yet, through conscientious living, unconsciously dwell upon a higher plane of being than others, endowed with greater mental powers, and superior knowledge and learning ; for there are things that we may learn through the emotions better than by reason alone. We cannot grasp the full meaning of anything quite impersonally, with only the intellect ; life must actually bring us into contact with it ; it must touch our sensibilities as well, in some way or another. By means of intuitive perception, and not by intellectual effort, do the subtle beauties of the spirit manifest themselves to us. Only by the aid of

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sympathy can we learn true wisdom, for the heart that does not feel cannot vibrate in harmony with what it does not hear or understand.

50

Although it is more difficult to lead a life of beauty in the hustle and struggle, with others, for mere existence, than in an atmosphere of sanctity and peace, created for ourselves by a life of meditation, yet must we expect something more of ourselves than merely our own salvation and happiness. Shall not this accomplish itself most surely while we are absorbed by, and engrossed in, the strife of daily life, seeking the good, the true, and the beautiful in all things?

51

It is often by means of exaggeration, caused by enthusiasm, that a question is most forcibly brought to notice.

Strong emotion awakens a responsive echo from all sides, and it is in subsequent quieter moments that the intellect comes to the rescue, sifts out the precious grain from the worthless chaff, which, however, serves as a rich mould in which thought germinates and grows afresh.

52

It is, however, enthusiasm that makes the world move, and what could be more stimulating, more worthy of enthusiasm, than the search and the struggle for the attainment of truth and beauty? It is the conventional, lazy type of virtue, that has not the energy or courage to think, or act for itself, that is so hopelessly uninteresting and dull; but truth and beauty cannot be placed within limitations of an artificial nature. They demand freedom, with our complete surrender and submission.

53

Not alone the power of giving expression to fair hidden gems of thought and feeling, but also indefatigable energy for labour, born of enthusiasm, distinguishes the genius from the mere man of talent, whose efforts soon end in weariness and lack of interest. It is the quality of thought, the motive and the enthusiasm we put into our work, that determines the interest and value of the same. It matters not what may be our station or calling in life ; no occupation in itself, done merely as a duty, can create beautiful ideals within us, but it is we who raise the standard of our work to the level of our ideals.

54

The ideal which is sought for in Art, in every system of religious teaching, is sometimes thought to be inaccessible, and something short of the same is accepted instead, and the ideal, in all

the fulness of its beauty, is lost sight of. There are, however, always some who never cease to be disturbed by thoughts of the unrealized ideal ; whose desire it is to place before us, again and again, the ideal in all its perfection and purity.

55

Nature but truly belongs to the eye that sees her beauty and meaning, and not, necessarily, to him who can afford to buy her by the acre. In our reading we take that which appeals to our train of thought, and leave that which is unsympathetic to our minds, or which we fail to grasp. A sermon, however clever and true, can rarely permanently benefit those who are not already inclined towards goodness and piety ; it cannot, as by magic, remove an evil of the will, a taint of the affections, or a falsity of the understanding. The most, indeed, that we could expect of a fellow-being were a patient and

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impartial hearing of what we have to say. The soul must spontaneously open the door from within, for each individual mind is a centre where thought-rays condense, the combination of which continually changes. These thought-rays can only unite with similar rays from another source, and are repelled by, and repel, antagonistic and entirely dissimilar thoughts. Is not this the secret of our sympathies, and antipathies, our inclinations, affections, and dislikes? Thus, also, no creed or philosophy can appeal to all alike, or make us one atom the better, unless it truly touch the heart and innermost feelings; for no argument can convince a mind that has not reached the stage of spiritual development necessary to enable it to comprehend the same.

No religion or philosophy can help all alike or in the same way. Even as a

mother must treat each of her children differently, according to its individual nature and needs, and must explain life and its surroundings to it according to its comprehensive powers, so also the Divine reveals itself to us according to our growing powers of understanding, and does not expect us to walk before we can stand alone. All that the Master asks of us is to seek that we may find, for not all by the same way may reach the true source of things Divine. God calls each of us by a different voice, it may be by means of the beauty of a noble thought ; perchance the soul may vibrate in answer to some wonderful sight or sound ; or maybe that sorrow or joy may come to make us feel a presentiment of things Divine.

Even though we may live amidst the most beautiful surroundings, they can

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do no more than touch us superficially through the grosser senses if we have not the corresponding beauty within our souls. To us beauty comes but a beggar, and can but exist, as far as we are concerned, by our sympathy and love; for the works of the great, the beauties of Nature, are but the outward expression of hidden thoughts and feelings, hopes and aspirations, dormant within our souls. The soul of man contains every note of the perfect octave of which the symphony of the Universe is composed, every letter of the alphabet with which to spell out the Divine script of Nature, for every form is but the symbol of a Divine thought, and Nature is the language of God which we must each learn to decipher.

58

The true artist, the genius, is he who, consciously or unconsciously, spells out to us letters of this Divine alphabet,

and puts together correctly the syllables of the vast language of manifestation. By means of a subtle power of suggestion, Art awakens the emotions, and opens to us the gateway to the land of dreams. The expression of the artist is the cause, and the impression made the effect, of Art. Indeed, the greatest worth of any Art lies in a nameless, evanescent trait, by which it generates within our mind fresh thoughts, a sense, however faint or vague, of spiritual loveliness. It comes, an ardent lover to the soul which may, by labour and self-sacrifice, perchance give birth to some more perfect child of stainless beauty and of pure delight. By a delicate instinct of choice, the artist holds fast and reveals to us facts hidden to our consciousness, and imparts to these a significance and perfection at times beyond his own knowledge and intention.

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59

Not alone the craving for the gratification of our desire for emotional, mental, and æsthetic pleasure—which may be as selfish as the desire for the indulgence of our more animal passions,—but the advancement and growth in beauty, purity, and harmony of being, for ourselves and others—the bringing into harmony of the material and the spiritual in man,—is the highest aim that art and religion, in all their various branches, can have. Although morality and æsthetics are two entirely different results, one of the spiritual and the other of the artistic sense, yet harmony is essential to the expression of truth, an indispensable attribute of all true well-being, and beauty.

60

The children of Harmony and Love are Happiness and Peace. To live

completely we must live in harmony with our best and highest aspirations, and each effort we put forth against our better nature results in an inharmonious thought or deed.

61

So full of capacity to flourish is the Divine, that it unveils itself to man by means of even imperfect instruments, but the inner and the outer man—the artist and his art—cannot be two things apart and yet be complete. The Divine must become warped and perverted in its expression unless its medium be undefiled, sound, and whole. Personality is the veil through which the Divine shines, and reveals itself in man, and it is the flaws in this personality which serve to obscure and make dim the rich beauty even of genius, causing it to flow into the wrong channels, and become productive of evil instead of good—for a force that is undisciplined becomes destructive in its workings.

Our ideal can never be more than a plaything to us if we do not make an earnest effort to make it the very essence of all that we think and do. Many of us are so enthusiastic, so charmed by the manifold attractions on the road, that we forget the object and aim of life's journey. Thus these small distractions by the way take the place of the higher ideal, and become our God, in whose likeness we unconsciously fashion our being. The more we are, however, able to raise our consciousness to the Divine, and the nearer we get to that pure light of which we now but perceive an occasional glimmer, the more lovely and attractive it will appear to us, and the more we must strive towards it that, in the end, we may see perfect day.

The Ideal, like the horizon, ever changes according to our point of view,

ever recedes as we advance. Indeed, who can say what is true morality, or perfection of beauty, now and for ever? Does not the standard of each age change with the evolution of its thought? Evil and good are but relative, and appertain to progress and to growth. Thus our ideas need constant readjustment as we grow, and if we wish to further our growth we must boldly reject all that does not really ring true to our own ears, at the same time keeping our mind's eye on the alert, ever to observe and learn afresh. Without moral energy and courage no moral progress is possible. If we fail to reach our ideal, it is not that the ideal does not exist, only that, alas! we did not attain to it.

The sooner we realize that it is our part in life to have our motives misunderstood, the sooner we shall learn to strike out a path of our own, doing that

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which the soul dictates, free from the opinion of others. So much of what we say and do has a double meaning—that attributed to it by others, and that which we ourselves intend to convey by our words and deeds. It is those alone who love us who are willing always to attribute a good, a worthy motive, to what we say and do ; and we should not fail to fully appreciate the sympathy, the intuitive understanding of friendship and love, even though it be not the full intellectual understanding we yearn for. We all appear at our best in an atmosphere of appreciation and love, yet he who would develop individuality must be prepared to stand alone, independent of this, even against the opinion of others. We must each live our own lives, each gain our own experience ; and though counsel and help may come to the soul from another, more truly beautiful than itself, yet the more it has assimilated of the Divine, the more must it also look to the Divine alone, within the temple of

the soul, for wisdom and strength, knowledge and truth.

65

Solitude must be the portion of the soul that would be strong ; and yet, by our love for individuals, and our yet higher love (born of our compassion) for all and their manifold and various needs, we shall not walk alone. Love is the bond that links us one to another and each to all ; not selfish love that seeks ever something for itself, but love that gives with joy of its fulness, even at the cost of renunciation or in exchange for pain. How seldom does the lover even, the father, the mother, show us a love like this, enduring, tender, and strong ! The lover who would throw all life, death, and eternity into the balance for himself and another, to create but one short, though perfect, hour of bliss—the parent who would ask but for the fulfilment of his ambition, the satisfaction,

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through his children, of his own vanity and pride—this is not the love that saves. Parents always wish their children to be happy, but must it always be in their way?—We are, however, only human, and each of us is bound to make some mistake in the education of our children, not the same as our parents, perchance, but some other instead.

66

So many of our social duties are mere devices to kill time, or, at any rate, have sprung from that motive. Is then life's short day of so little value to us that we can thus lightly cast to the winds moments from the small measure of most precious hours that we may call our own?

67

Conventionality, which is so great a bugbear to some of us, is, in reality, the greatest help we have in intercourse with

our fellows. It is often the rules of etiquette alone that save us from the "familiarity that breeds contempt." The laws of society should, however, be our aid in intercourse with our fellows, and nothing more. They should not be chains to bind the soul and banish individuality. Each of us must try to develop our own powers of judgment, and the highest spiritual beauty we can ourselves discern is right for us, though it may not be the best for another.

68

Breadth of thought and freedom from prejudice are very different from licence, and *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*, though not *tout excuser*. It is only as a man advances spiritually that he learns to understand what is necessary for his true advancement and happiness ; and as a rule, he does not need any aid from our often mistaken and worthless judgment, though we may often aid in the birth of

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new thought. Only that seed can grow to fruition which falls on suitable ground, and every mistake that is made brings its own punishment in its wake. We should not, however, be discouraged in helping when and where we can, though we should be sparing in offering advice, and careful who and wherefore we censure, asking ourselves first whether it is an honest and sincere desire for the welfare of another, or the pleasure of appearing witty or wise that impels us to criticise. By offering unasked for advice we more often succeed in irritating than in aiding those to whom we wish to be helpful, and get a reputation for being meddlesome. The best way to gain respect for our ideals is for us to live them.

69

Only time and opportunity can reveal to us those whom we can unreservedly trust and call our friends. It is not,

however, in shutting ourselves up, by reason of our prejudices, or to avoid disagreeable people, that we are likely to meet those whose society might be pleasant to us ; indeed, if we wish others to give us of their best, and to act towards us in a natural and unconstrained manner, we must make them feel that we are anxious to think well of them. Each individual interprets some other aspect of life, and if we but gather the best from each, as the bee gathers the honey from the heart of the flower—leaving the rest—the greater our experience and knowledge will grow also. We can never, however, expect too little of others, or too much of ourselves. We must take people as they are, and make the best of them, expecting nothing, but accepting gratefully all that they can give us. We should not seek the realization of our ideals in the world without, but within our own souls, being satisfied then with the best and highest alone.

70

Our religion should be the expression of our ideals. As soon as it fails to be this, it must, of a necessity, cease to be a living reality, and its power for good is gone. Indeed it often becomes a mere cloak for hypocrisy, hence some other expression for what is good, true, and beautiful must take its place.

71

Religion, as presented in the form of an orthodox creed, is often the only real poetry that enters into the lives of those to whom life is but one long struggle for existence. By its beauty it comes to save the finer instincts and senses from becoming altogether numb through sheer physical exhaustion ; but is it not really of little consequence what creed we confess? Surely the vital question is—do we act up to our faith, whatever this may be? It is the object of every

form of religion alike to produce right living, and to put an ideal of beauty before us; and whatever the form of worship may be, it is always the Divine, in His oneness, or His divisible nature—by one, or more of the many names by which He is known—whom we adore. Each of us must really strive individually to bring our souls before God, our highest aspiration, in the way that seems the best to ourselves. As the soul grows, it yearns ever more for perfection of beauty, and for union with the Divine, through which we may alone gain the knowledge of all things, and feel completely, and with full and perfect comprehension.

The soul is the sum of the good gained by the experience of the "Ego," a spark of the Divine fire which, if fed, will grow to be a mighty flame, and the more concentration, steadfastness of

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purpose, and purity of motive we acquire the more is there of our individuality left to survive the life of the flesh.

73

Our souls are the drops of water of the stream, the spirit of our little Universe. Each crystalline drop reflects some other shade and colour, some other aspect of its surroundings, yet for ever it flows with the stream to join the mighty ocean—the Divine, inexhaustible, and eternal—whose boundless depths are absolute rest, and whose surface and separate parts are yet eternal change and motion. Are not our souls like drops of water which, by means of various forces with which they combine, help to form the ice, snow, rain, vapour, clouds, and streams, all eventually to return to the great ocean from which they came?

The incomplete nature of our life on earth must lead us to believe that there must be a future existence which will complete our present being, and if it is probable that we must pass through this life to go on to another, it is equally likely that we existed before we came to this earth, and that our life here is but an intermediate stage, a more or less small portion of our entire existence. We can, therefore, during so small a part of our whole being, scarcely expect to be able to regard and comprehend the entire scheme of our existence as a great whole, though we are in eternity now as much as we ever will be. Let us, therefore, enjoy to the full the brightness of to-day. The joy of living is good, and so long as our pleasures do not hinder the development of our souls, so long as they remain our servants, and do not become our masters, surely they are

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legitimate. Though one form of enjoyment may be higher than another, both may become selfish, or both may be good, according to time, place, and proportion.

75

Only he who has won faith by painful experience of doubt can know its most perfect ecstasy of joy ; but is not the wondrous, rapturous bliss of faith, wedded to enthusiasm, a reality worth striving to attain ? We surely have as much need of true faith nowadays as in the past, when it was sufficient to say " Believe," and people had not begun, so generally, to think for themselves. We may not now need the faith in dogmas, in creeds that put a stop to all further individual thought, but we must keep our enthusiasm for truth and beauty, and our faith in the inherent goodness of man, which is God,

the eternal ideal. We must march on, although we know not what shall be our final goal, contented that there is still so much beyond us of light and beauty to nourish and sustain our hopes.

THE END



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